

BRINGING HOME THE GOSPEL

November 30, 2025 • 1st Sunday of Advent • Matthew 24:37-44

Stay Awake

Our first Scripture reading is the Gospel for the first Sunday of Advent. Its purpose is to remind us that Christmas is not just the day on which we celebrate Jesus' birth: it is also a celebration of Jesus' Second Coming at the end times. Matthew is telling us how important it is to be watchful so that we are always ready to greet the Lord when he comes.

This Gospel reading is a sober beginning for a weekly journal. Yet Matthew's advice to be ready for anything is certainly still valid today. Somehow, we have to balance living in the present with a healthy concern for tomorrow. We need to concentrate on living one day at a time—fix breakfast, go to work, and plan for that special vacation, always aware that no plans are set in concrete. We are never quite in control.

I may wake up in the morning to discover there's no milk and then be late for work because of bad traffic. Worse yet, I could get to work and find out the company is cutting back and I'm going to be laid off. So much for that hoped-for vacation. We can plan for all sorts of contingencies, but we cannot control what curve balls life will throw at us.

I used to think that God was testing me, but now I realize God doesn't play that way. As Christians, we believe in a God of abundant love who doesn't test his children to see if they will fail. What I do know is that God is with us in every step and misstep. Indeed, Jesus tells us that he is not just with us but in us.

So we plan and re-plan and count on God to be at every crossroads. We grieve over our losses, but

find strength in knowing we have Jesus' endurance and courage to lean on. We stay alert for what may come, but we find God in the present. If we remember Jesus is always with us, as close as our next breath, we can better stay alert and recognize Jesus when he comes again.

FAMILY RESPONSE

Together, draw up a list of ways each family member can show his or her love for each other in the New Year. Post the list on the refrigerator.

PERSONAL RESPONSE

As you begin this journal, what are your hopes and concerns for the year ahead?
What were the highlights from last year?
What are you looking forward to next week?
What are your concerns?

BRINGING HOME THE GOSPEL

December 7, 2025 • 2nd Sunday of Advent • Matthew 3:1-12

Produce Good Fruit

John the Baptist let his followers know that he was baptizing with water, but the one who was coming after him, Jesus, would baptize with the Holy Spirit. He reminds us that it is not enough to be sorry for our sins or shake our heads helplessly over the wrongs of the world. We must be people of action and do something to change things.

John's baptism promoted a turn away from sin. The baptism Jesus offers not only turns us away from sin, it propels us into loving action. Our baptism into the Body of Christ empowers us to carry Christ's love to the world. If it doesn't do that then we are like the chaff of wheat, the useless husk covering the seed that John the Baptist talks about in this reading.

Our baptism marks us as children of God, a people of love. Not just the hearts-and-flowers-love that musicians sing about or even the platonic love between really good friends. As a matter of fact, we don't even have to like someone in order to love him or her in Christian love.

The love we share as God's children is more like a bond. It is the God-glue that links us to one another, binding us in a relationship closer than brothers and sisters or husband and wife. It makes all people, all creation, one with each other and with God.

This is the love God wants us to share with our children. It may not have the same euphoric feeling we felt for our children when they were born, but it is no less honest or deep. Somehow in those first few years of their lives we have to help our youngsters carry the familial love they experience at home to the whole family of God.

We can do this by introducing them early to the community of faith: bringing them to Mass as babies, enrolling them in the parish preschool program, taking them as they grow older to serve at the soup kitchen or sort food for the Thanksgiving baskets. If we get involved in our parish community, our children can meet and interact with their peers as well as adults and experience the love that binds God's community. Healthy seeds can be planted to bear all sorts of good fruit in their futures.

FAMILY RESPONSE

Talk about how brothers and sisters should treat each other. Come up with a list of ten things they should expect from each other. Make sure standing up for each other and protecting each other is on the list.

PERSONAL RESPONSE

How can people tell that you are a Christian? What do you want to remember from last week? What are you looking forward to next week? What are your concerns?